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30th September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been an intensive and busy but very rewarding start of the new academic year. I'm very pleased about how quickly the students have settled into their school life demonstrating positive curiosity in their relationships with their school friends.

From the whole school community a **warm welcome to our new students and their families** to the school community:

- At Meadow Wood they are our little 'Rabbits' Luther, Felix, Michele, Davi and Emma

We have made some **new appointments** within our admin and premises team: We have an excellent admin and premises team within the federation. Some members of staff work across the federation and some mainly in their respected schools; Celia is working on a 'Team Chart' that will shortly be shared with you; this is to advise you of different team member's roles.

It is with great regret to share that we will need to say '**Good Bye**' to some important people within our school community;

- Lene Havardstun will move back to Norway and finishes her outstanding career at Meadow Wood School at the end of October half term. Lene will be greatly missed. We will wish her all the best in the next phase of her life.
- Our highly regarded paediatrician Dr Heckmatt is retiring; his last clinic at Meadow Wood School will be held on 11th October. Dr Heckmatt has provided our families and staff with rounded advice in complex medical matters for a number years. We are grateful for his support and advice, and wish him a very happy retirement!
- Breakspeare School nurse Tanya Marshal will sadly finish working with us next week. Tuesday will be her last day at Breakspeare. Thank you Tanya for your support and work with our children and young people.

We are recruiting for a new teacher at Meadow Wood School. Meanwhile Edwige Davies, our highly experienced HLTA, is appointed as an unqualified teacher for an interim period. At present time, we do not know who will be appointed as a new paediatrician of Meadow Wood School – further information will follow. Sarah Sharpe will be the main school nurse at Breakspeare for three days per week – other days will be covered by community nurses. Sarah has already worked at school and she is familiar with our students.

There are some **exciting developments at Meadow Wood School** that will further enhance the students' learning

- The LA has agreed to fund and contract conversion of our unused garage to our new soft play area. The federation will fund internal furnishing and equipment as the soft play area will be in use for both schools' enrichment. The development is scheduled to be ready by the beginning of the New Year.
- The school has established a 'Garden Party' to plan developments in our outdoor areas. Some brilliant groundwork has already happened – thanks to those families who have donated plants and bricks etc. for this work. This work will continue and new outdoor equipment will be installed, the first being the wheelchair swing.
- I would like to express our sincere thanks to Isla's mum Claire who has generously given her time to refresh the flowerbeds at the front of the school. Thank you! They look amazing!

We have reorganised our admin, HR and leadership offices and the main entrance to school. This work was necessary to ensure smoother organisation and management of our school processes and premises. I hope that you find the entrance to the school now more welcoming!

EHCP procedures will change during the academic year. The SEND service in Hertfordshire is developing a new way of processing annual reviews which will help to streamline the administrative side of the process so that both parents/carers and the school, would receive timely responses and quality EHC plans. The new process involves the school completing annual review paperwork and recommended changes to the plan online through a new form, and submitting it back to the local authority securely through this. Please be prepared that we may trial this year.

Governor vacancies. If you would be interested in working as a parent governor or co-opted governor in the governing board of the Sunflower Federation please contact Merja for further information. This is an exciting opportunity to contribute to the development of the provision within the federation.

Breakspeare FAB 'Friends at Breakspeare' has received a significant donation of £38,000 for three consecutive years (total £113,000) to provide support and enrichment services delivered within the federation. This money is ring-fenced for the external professionals' services based on donor's discretion and direction such as for example drama specialist, counselling service, musicians or other therapists or external professionals. This year the monies have been agreed to be used for counselling service for the staff; drama therapy, language development and musicians interventions for the students. More than two thirds of the money will be used for the services for the students. We are very grateful for this extraordinary generous donation that will make a significant impact in support and enrichment of our provision in both of our schools.

Lastly a couple of words about **COVID-19 situation:** So far we have had one confirmed case amongst Meadow Wood students. This resulted with a recommendation that all members of staff, students and other professionals who have been in contact with this child to have a PCR test. All of these tests came back negative and luckily, the child concerned, has made a speedy recovery.

All double vaccinated staff members can continue working in school, if they have been in contact with a COVID-19 positive person. So unless we will have a local outbreak and many members of staff or students fall ill at the same time due to COVID-19, it is unlikely that we need to close the school for COVID reasons. The only exception may be an identified specific need to close the class for one day in order to be able to clean and disinfect the learning environment; this was IPC-team's recommendation for the case mentioned earlier.

The schools have been provided with CO2-devices to monitor ventilation in different areas in our schools. So far there have been no issues in teaching and learning spaces of the students. Some areas for the staff on the other hand lack sufficient ventilation but we are addressing these issues.

Special schools' staff are considered to belong in the same priority category for the third COVID-19 vaccination as health and social care colleagues. All staff who have had two vaccinations will be offered the third vaccination after 180 days from their 2nd one. These vaccinations will take place in November.

This autumn parents evenings will be held via focused telephone or Teams conversations with the teachers. These discussions will take place two weeks before half term. The teachers will contact you to suggest a mutually convenient time for these meetings. We are aiming to resume face to face parents meetings for spring or summer term.

This autumn **reporting the students' absences** has caused us some practical problems

- Please remember to inform the school office of your child absence as early as you know and this should happen between 8 and 9 in the morning
- This ensures smooth administrative and classroom organisations.

Please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher, our deputies – Darren and Liz, or myself if you want to clarify anything, give feedback or if you are concerned about something. Please be active in contacting us as early as possible so that we can work effectively in partnership to support you and solve any emerging concerns as a matter of urgency.

The school is closed for the students

- Tomorrow, Friday 1st October for INSET day
- Friday 26th November for Occasional Day
- Monday 29th November for INSET day

We truly appreciate your support as well as your communication and suggestions. It is crucially important that we continue to work in partnership to ensure quality of provision for your child; and during these unprecedented times also the safety of all with our community.

Kind regards,
Merja

